

## YATTO SUZUKI'S SPEECH

Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to talk about Shin even though I may not be the most appropriate one to do it.

Shin and I met about 16 years ago when I moved here from San Francisco. In the SGI-USA young men's division, he was my chapter leader when I was a district leader, and we spent a lot of time together in SGI activities, chanting and encouraging other members.

Over time Shin and I discovered some similarities in our lives. We were born in the same year. Shin's middle name was Ryan – the same as mine. His mother and mine share the same name – Kazuko. Shin-chan, his nickname, is the same as my deceased older brother. We both married American women, and we even went through divorce all at the same time.

When we were going through the painful time of divorce, we started spending lots of weekends together for something fun to do because our wives didn't want us around. We kind of comforted each other that way. That's when I asked him to teach me how to surf, too. One summer, we went to beach almost on every weekend. We used home visitation to Young men's Division members as an excuse to leave home and went off to beach after the visitation. We enjoyed surfing and watching bikinis on the beaches all day long. He was really filling the loneliness in my heart.

Shin was a man of patience, compassion and listening: one of the most important qualities of the Buddha. He was always there to listen to me whenever I needed somebody to dump all my negativity on.

Because we spent so much time together back then, I always had some fear of invading his privacy. Even during his last days at the hospital that fear came back in my mind, feeling that I was invading his last moment with Carolyn. As a man of true compassion, Shin probably sensed it and gave me an answer to the question I had held for 16 years.

In the night before his departure, when I was chanting beside him and rubbing his legs, he suddenly woke up and called my name. So I held his hand. He said, "Yatto-san. Thank you so much. I really had fun. I really really had fun, and I mean it! Please become happy no matter what, Yatto-san." In specific, it was a message to me personally, but in general, it was his message to all of us saying that he really enjoyed his life and there was no regret.

So in honor of Shin, let's all have lots of fun in this lifetime. And let's all become really happy!

Shin-chan, thank you so much for being our friend.